

**Draft Summary of the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group Meeting  
Oroville Facilities Relicensing (FERC Project No. 2100)  
February 24, 2004**

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) hosted a meeting for the Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group (RSWG) on February 24, 2004 in Oroville.

A summary of the discussion, decisions made, and action items is provided below. This summary is not intended to be a transcript, analysis of the meeting, or to indicate agreement or disagreement with any of the items summarized, except where expressly stated. The intent is to present a summary for interested parties who could not attend the meeting. The following are attachments to this summary:

Attachment 1	Meeting Agenda
Attachment 2	Meeting Attendees
Attachment 3	Flip Chart Notes
Attachment 4	Cross-Resource Action Meeting – Flip Chart Notes
Attachment 5	Resource Action Matrix – Cross-Resource Impacts
Attachment 6	Presentation: SP-R9 (Existing Recreation Use)
Attachment 7	Presentation: SP-R14 (Assess Regional Recreation and Barriers to Recreation)
Attachment 8	Presentation: SP-R15 (Recreation Suitability)

### **Introduction**

Attendees were welcomed to the RSWG meeting. Attendees introduced themselves and their affiliations and the desired outcomes of the meeting were discussed. The meeting agenda and list of meeting attendees are appended to this summary as Attachments 1 and 2, respectively. Meeting flip chart notes are included as Attachment 3.

### **Action Items – January 29, 2004 Recreation and Socioeconomics Work Group Meeting**

A summary of the January 29, 2004 RSWG meeting is posted on the relicensing web site. The RSWG reviewed the status of action items from that meeting as follows:

<b>Action Item #R98:</b>	Distribute schedule for release of study reports.
<b>Status:</b>	Doug Rischbieter (DWR) reviewed the schedule for the remaining study plans with the RSWG. The following study reports were distributed and discussed at the meeting: R9, R14, and R15. In March, it is anticipated that R4 and R7 reports will be distributed and presented to the RSWG. R3, R5, and R12 reports are scheduled for release in April. The last set of reports, which include R13 and the two socioeconomic studies R18 and R19, are scheduled for release in May. Subsequently, the Recreation Needs Analysis (R17), which synthesizes all of the information from all of the various studies, will likely be released in June 2004. It was noted that the Recreation Plan developed for the Project would be consistent with the Needs Analysis, at a minimum, and may also contain additional items not definitively justified by the Needs Analysis.
<b>Action Item #R99:</b>	Send technical study reports to JPA members as they are completed.
<b>Status:</b>	Doug Rischbieter (DWR) gave a set of completed study reports to Sonny Brandt for distribution to the JPA. As future studies are completed, they will be distributed to the JPA as requested.

**Action Item #R100:** Color code all resource actions with a submitted RAIF on the “B” and “Settlement” lists for cross-resource impacts.

**Status:** The RSWG hosted a meeting with representatives from the Environmental Work Group (EWG) and the Engineering and Operations Work Group (EOWG) to discuss cross-resource impacts related to recreation, water flow and temperature, and environmental resources. The flip chart notes that were recorded for that meeting are attached to this meeting summary as Attachment 4. At that meeting, a color-coded resource action matrix for the RSWG was distributed to meeting participants (see Attachment 5). The color-coded matrix evaluates all resource actions with completed resource action information forms (RAIFs) for potential cross-resource impacts, including items from the “B” and “Settlement” list.

## **Review Comments on Reports**

The RSWG provided comments on the study reports that were presented at the January 2004 RSWG meeting. For each report that was presented last month, a member of the Consultant Team provided a brief overview of the study and then opened up the discussion to questions and comments. Most of the comments were recorded on the flip chart notes (see Attachment 3). The RSWG was asked to provide written comments where possible. A summary of the verbal comments are provided below:

### ***R2 – Recreation Safety Assessment***

- Will trail hazards be evaluated specifically? Conflicts on trails are based on the surveys completed by trail users. The Consultant Team reviewed incident reports dating back to the 1990s and identified those that were recreation related but did not focus specifically on trails issues.
- It was noted that many incidents go unreported. Unreported incidents typically occur on low-use days. There is a need for more patrols in the Project area.
- It was clarified that there are no boat patrols on the Thermalito Forebay. DPR staff typically responds to incidents on the surface of the Forebay only in the case of emergencies.
- There was confusion on how radio communication is defined in the report. DPR, as a law enforcement agency, uses a different bandwidth than DWR. DPR also has satellite radios that function in areas without cellular phone coverage, such as the upstream Feather River tributary reaches. It was suggested that CB radio transmissions should be monitored by local marinas, which could aid in response to incidents.
- Safety concerns at the Thermalito Afterbay are a recurring issue.
- Pg. 4-1: The RSWG noted that many, non-recreation related features are not addressed in the report; the focus of the report was intended to be on recreation-related safety.
- There is a need for a more comprehensive law enforcement analysis, which looks at the entire project area, not just the OWA.
- Pg. 5-12: Need consistent incident reporting by all applicable agencies. The Department of Boating and Waterways (DBAW) only reports certain types of accidents.
- Pg. 5-19: Information on incidents at other lakes does not allow for a comparison to the Oroville facilities because there is no information on reservoir surface areas or boat densities. It was noted that this information was provided for background purposes only, and was not intended for analytical purposes.
- Pg. 5-22: Wood debris moved to coves is not necessarily collected annually and often moves back into the lake, which represents a safety hazard; this issue needs to be addressed in Section 6.0.
- Sec 5.3-2: This section dealing with wildfire hazard notes that there is a Fire Management Plan for Loafer Creek. Steve Feazel (DPR) noted that a new fire management plan is being prepared for the entire SRA.

- The report does not match the study plan in that there are no “recommendations.” It was clarified that “conclusions” and/or “considerations” listed in Section 6.0 of the report are presented in place of “recommendations.”
- The question was raised whether there is a 24-hour hotline for emergencies; there is in fact 24-hour staffing at DWR’s Area Control Center (ACC).
- There are concerns that due to DPR reorganization there will be a reduction in staffing and associated safety protection.
- It was alleged that the DWR-contracted security patrol staff is unprofessional and not consumer-friendly.
- There is a need for more information on trail encounters. A specific in-depth question was not included in the trail surveys.

#### ***R11 – Recreation and Public Use Impact Assessment***

- The RSWG asked if soil erosion was evaluated; soil erosion and compaction were both evaluated in the report.
- Pg. 5-4: The RSWG asked about the location of survey findings related to beach impacts. It was noted that beach areas were evaluated, but not in the context of a separate survey. All of the site evaluation forms are included in the back of the report. There is also a table in the report that includes a column on beach impacts.
- There are concerns related to future public use impacts due to increases in population and potential shortfalls in public agency budgets.
- The RSWG expressed support for visitor education related to public use impacts

#### ***R16 – Whitewater and River Boating Report***

- A participant of the WG stated that the Bald Rock run is more commonly used than reported. He estimated that there are several hundred trips down this run annually; more specific information will be provided to the Consultant Team regarding use levels.
- There may be the need for shuttle service serving the Bald Rock run, in addition to the North Fork reach. This is especially true if adjacent private properties are not accessible in the future.
- There was a request to get information on PG&E flows that affect the North Fork run. This information is not typically provided to DWR. There may be opportunities for future coordination on notification of flows between DWR and PG&E.
- DWR noted that it did not want the report to suggest support of trespass on private property for whitewater recreation purposes. Whitewater enthusiasts stated they typically have permission from current landowner(s).
- There was a concern that the report did not disclose an optimum flow level per the study plan. It was explained that the report was not intended to be a flow study, which is very expensive to conduct. Instead, the report is based on anecdotal information provided by whitewater user groups. For the purposes of this study, optimum whitewater experiences are based on Lake Oroville elevation and other factors, and not flow.
- Flow and water-level issues will likely be among cross-resource impacts between environmental and recreation (e.g., whitewater) interests.

#### ***Phase II Background Report – Recreation and Tourism Economy in Oroville***

- At the last RSWG meeting, there was a suggestion that the report identify expansion plans by businesses in the Oroville area; the Consultant Team is in the process of acquiring this information.
- It was noted that there is a distinction between recreation and tourism. The lack of recreation in the Low Flow Section was suggested as one reason for lack of tourism in the downtown area.

- Some participants suggested that although portions of the Low Flow Section are not in the FERC project boundary, there is a definite nexus between this area and the Project so there should be an emphasis on economic development of this area.
- To meet boater needs, the RSWG suggested consideration of dry-storage facilities, particularly if no new marinas are developed or existing marinas are not expanded.
- The RSWG felt that the report needed more conclusions/recommendations. It was noted that this report was intended for background information purposes only.
- This report validated many of the concerns expressed by ORAC in the past.
- Some participants suggested the need for an analysis of the economic impacts of the major fee increases proposed at Lake Oroville, including surcharges on fishing tournaments.
- There is a need for a local RV park that is within walking distance to the lake or served by shuttle services.
- Better signage is needed throughout the Project area, particularly directing visitors to the downtown area.
- The City is currently in the process of developing plans for a downtown visitor center. Visitors have difficulty finding downtown attractions and the Oroville facilities.

### ***Phase II Background Report – Property Value Analysis***

- The suggestion made at the last RSWG meeting to include a lagged economic variable in the hedonic model was implemented. Although this variable, represented by a 3-year lag of statewide unemployment rates, improved the model and had a statistically significant relationship with property values, it did not explain the counter-intuitive relationship between lake levels and property values.

### **New Study Reports**

The Consultant Team made presentations to the RSWG on three new study reports (R9, R14, and R15). Study R9 is the *Existing Recreation Use Study*; R14 is the *Assessment of Regional Recreation and Barriers to Recreation*; and R15 is the *Recreation Suitability* study. The PowerPoint presentations for each of these reports are included as part of this meeting summary as Attachments 6, 7, and 8, respectively.

During and after each presentation, there was opportunity for questions and answers, which are summarized below. The RSWG was instructed to review the reports and provide comments in writing or at the next RSWG meeting.

#### ***R9 – Existing Recreation Use***

- Recreation use estimates reported in the study should be rounded because they are based on a complex methodology and set of assumptions that do not reflect the level of precision implied in the document.
- Trail logbooks were consulted but not used in the calculation of trail use estimates.
- Sightseeing activities mainly include activities undertaken while in automobiles.
- Although the Afterbay outlet is represented in the report by one site, it really consists of multiple sites.

#### ***R14 – Assess Regional Recreation and Barriers to Recreation***

- It was noted that this report is not a preview of the Recreation Needs Analysis, but instead an attempt to evaluate recreation at Lake Oroville in the broader context of regional recreation opportunities.
- Overall, Lake Oroville matches well with regional recreation sites.
- Many conclusions in the report contradict proposed resource actions, including some of those on the “A” list.

### ***R15 – Recreation Suitability Analysis***

- This analysis does not detail cultural resource constraints.
- Cultural resources do not necessarily prohibit recreational development.
- The conclusions in this study do not necessarily apply to dispersed recreation and trail uses.

### **Other**

The RSWG discussed the JPA letter requesting the transfer of six resource actions to the "A" list. It had been suggested at the previous (January 29, 2004) RSWG meeting that these resource actions would not be transferred if the cross-resource discussion would include "B" and "S" list items for which a RAIF had been submitted; DWR included RAs meeting those criteria on the Cross-Resource Issue Matrix (Attachment 5) and in the earlier (afternoon) discussion. The disposition of these resource actions (that they will remain on the "B" and "S" lists, will be reported to the Plenary Group at their March 2004 meeting.

All reports distributed to the RSWG are considered "final". DWR does not anticipate the need to reissue any of the reports unless there is a major omission or error, which would necessitate additional review. Minor revisions to the reports will be made via an errata sheet that will be included as an appendix to the reports. All written comments will be part of the administrative record. It was noted that all of the study reports would be submitted with the FERC license application in 2005.

There were concerns that many of the study reports have a disclaimer stating that they do not represent the "official position" of DWR. Because of this qualifier, there were concerns that the reports would not be suitable for use in the settlement negotiation process. It was clarified that these reports are not considered "official" because they have not gone through upper DWR management (Director) review, which is necessary for a document to be considered official. It was noted that DWR management would sign off on the license application, which will include all of the study reports as supporting documents. It was also noted that the findings or conclusions in the reports do not represent commitments by DWR.

The RSWG suggested the need to identify connections between the conclusions/recommendations made in all of the study reports and proposed resource actions, either to validate existing resource actions or help develop new resource actions. This will occur in the development of the recreation needs analysis in SP-R17.

The RSWG requested that there be tracking of how the study plans respond to the resource issues (e.g., issues statements) identified at the beginning of the relicensing process. It was noted that each individual resource action will be tracked and that because the resource actions have been developed in response to resource issues, this task is essentially being completed.

It was noted that the DPR General Plan team working on the Lake Oroville SRA General Plan would make a presentation to the RSWG at their next meeting in March.

The resource action matrix will be updated to include new information, including two new completed resource action identification forms and new proposals, one of which deals with targets for recreation use increases.

### **Next Steps**

The RSWG agreed on the following meeting date/time:

Date: Thursday, March 25, 2004

Time: 6:00 to 10:00 PM

Location: Oroville

### **Action Items**

The following list of action items identified by the RSWG includes a description of the action, the participant responsible for the action, and item status.

**Action Item #R101:** Report back to the Plenary Group regarding the disposition of resource actions that the JPA requested to be transferred to the "A" list.

**Responsible:** DWR

**Due Date:** March 23, 2004

**Action Item #R102:** Bring copies of study reports presented at previous meetings to subsequent RSWG meetings.

**Responsible:** DWR

**Due Date:** March 25, 2004

**Action Item #R103:** Append cross-resource meeting flip chart notes to the February RSWG meeting summary.

**Responsible:** DWR

**Due Date:** March 18, 2004

**Action Item #R104:** Update RSWG resource action matrix based on new information acquired since the last update.

**Responsible:** DWR

**Due Date:** March 25, 2004